# The Marathon Mystery

## A Story of Manhattan

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CHAPTER IV.

THE coroner's court was crowded, as it always is at any hearing presenting features of morbid or sensational interest, and Goldberg, with an inborn love of the theatric, arranged his witnesses so as to lead gradually to the climax, the denouement. He put the janitor on the stand first, and then had Simmonds tell his story. Some medical testimony followed as to the exact nature of Thompson's injuries, and the bullet, which had been extracted, was put in evidence—it was plainly much too large to have come from Miss Croydon's pistol. Finally Miss Croydon herself was called. A little gasp of delicious excitement ran through the crowd as she appeared at the door of the witness room. Here was a tidbit to touch the palates of even the jaded police reporters.

Godfrey, looking at her as she came steadily forward to the stand, felt his heart warm with admiration. She seemed perfectly composed and, if not perfectly at ease, at least as nearly so as any woman of her position could be in such a place. Godfrey was pleased to see Drysdale in close attendance, and he nodded to him encouragingly.

Miss Croydon told her story clearly and with an accent of sincerity there was no doubting. It differed in one detail from the story she had told the night before. Thompson, she said, had perceived the intruder, and there had been a short, fierce struggle before he fell under the blow of the pipe. He was not unconscious, but was struggling to his feet again when his assailant shot him.

The coroner glanced at the jury, but none of them seemed disposed to ask any questions. Then Goldberg made a sign to Simmonds. He left the room, but reappeared in a moment, leading in Jimmy the Dude.

Not until they were quite near did Miss Croydon perceive them; then, as her eyes met the prisoner's, she half started from her chair, her face like marble. As for Jimmy, Godfrey was astonished to perceive the fascinated gaze he bent upon Miss Croydon. Goldberg had perceived their agitation, and the gaze he bent upon the witness grew perceptibly more stern.

"Miss Croydon," he began, "you have described the guilty man as short and heavy set with a dark mustache turning up at the ends. Look at the prisoner before you. Is he the man?"

"He is not," replied the witness in a firm voice and without an instant's hesitation.

"You are sure?"

"Perfectly sure; there is little or no resemblance."

"That is all," he said abruptly. "You may go, Miss Croydon."

She passed from sight, the door closed, and Godfrey leaned back in his chair to hear Jimmy tell a smooth story of his doings the night before. Magraw and half a dozen others confirmed the tale; it was a really good alibi, carefully arranged; there was nothing to disprove it, and at the end the jury, without retiring, handed in the usual verdict of death at the hands of a person unknown.

When it was over Simmonds crooked at Godfrey an inviting finger, and together they went down to the detective's private office.

"Sit down," said Simmonds. "I want to talk to you. We're up against a tough proposition."

Godfrey sat down and looked at him.

"Have you gone through Thompson's belongings?"

"Here they are," and Simmonds brought out a canvas bag and opened it. "Look at them."

Godfrey turned out the contents and examined them piece by piece. It was merely a lot of ordinary clothing, most of it much the worse for wear and all of it strongly impregnated with the odor of tobacco.

"Anything in the pockets?" asked Godfrey.

"Not a thing except some loose smoking tobacco. There's one thing about the clothing, though—have you noticed? It's all summer clothing; see these linen trousers, now?"

Godfrey nodded with drawn brows.

"What's this?" he asked suddenly, holding up a swart object shaped like a clam shell and halving in the same way along the sharp edge.

"I don't know. A curio picked up at sea somewhere, perhaps. I have a theory that Thompson was a sailor."

"Why?"

"Well, the bag, in the first place—only a sailor would carry his clothes that way. Then put your head down in it and under the tobacco you'll smell the salt."

Godfrey sniffed and nodded again. Then he got out his knife.

"Let's take a look at the inside of Mr. Thompson's curio," he said, and inserted the blade.

A twist and the sides unclosed. Simmonds sprang back with a sharp cry of surprise as he saw what lay within, and even Godfrey's heart gave a sudden leap.

For there, coiled thrice upon itself, lay a little viper, with venomous, triangular head.

Then in an instant Godfrey smiled.

"It's not alive," he said. "Don't you see, it's some marvelous kind of nut."

Simmonds approached cautiously and took another look.

"A nut?" he repeated. "A nut? Well, that beats me!"

And well it might, for in every detail the form was perfect. Godfrey looked at it musingly.

"This may give us a clew," he said. "I shouldn't imagine a nut like this grows in many parts of the world, though, of course, a sailor might pick it up anywhere—from another sailor, in a slop shop, even here in New York, perhaps."

He closed the shell together again and placed it in the bag, stuffing the rest of the clothing in after it.

"Thompson had no very exalted idea of cleanliness," he remarked. "His clothing needs a visit to the laundry. And this is all?"

"Yes. He'd rented his furniture from a store down the street. He had to pay his rent in advance because he had so little baggage. That receipt's the only thing that's got his name on it—oh, yes. There's a letter tattooed on his left arm, but it's not a T—it's a J."

"Which goes to show that his name wasn't Thompson. I think you're right, Simmonds, in putting him down as a sailor. I thought so last night; in fact, I've already got two men making a tour of the docks trying to find somebody who knew him."

"Have you?" said Simmonds, smiling. "That's like you. There's another curious thing, though, about the clothing he had on."

"What is that?"

"Some of it's marked with one initial, some with another. Not one piece is marked with his."

The door opened and the coroner's clerk entered.

"Mr. Goldberg sent the exhibits back to you," he said, holding out a parcel to Simmonds.

Simmonds opened it and took out a pocketbook, a pipe, a knife and some silver money.

"All right," he said, and signed a receipt.

Godfrey waited until the door closed, then he rose and came over to Simmonds' side.

"There's something here that might help us," he said, picking up the pocketbook. "Those newspaper clippings—why, they're not here!"

Simmonds smiled dryly.

"That's another thing I wanted to tell you. The clippings have been removed."

"Removed? By whom?"

"That's a question. They were removed some time between the moment we looked at them and the moment the coroner took charge."

Godfrey stared at him with startled eyes.

"You remember," Simmonds continued, "that after we looked at the pocketbook I put it back in Thompson's pocket."

"Yes; I saw you do that."

"We then went into the bedroom and had a look around, leaving the body alone"—

"With Miss Croydon," said Godfrey, completing the sentence.

"There's another thing," continued Simmonds after a moment. "Here's the piece of pipe we found on the floor. Do you know where it came from?"

"No—I was going to look that up."

"It came from the radiator. The connections were defective, and a plumber was replacing them. This is a piece of pipe he had removed and left lying *behind* the radiator. He remembers it distinctly. Do you recall the position of the radiator?"

"Yes; opposite the bedroom door."

"Exactly. Then the person coming from that door must have crossed the room to get it. More than that, he must have hunted for it or known it was there. Miss Croydon knows more than she's told us. I don't think she's been square with us."

"Well, perhaps she hasn't," Godfrey said slowly. "Anyway, we've got to work at the case from the other end. We've got to identify Thompson first."

"Yes," agreed Simmonds. "You'll let me know if you find out anything."

"Of course," said Godfrey, rising, and with a curt nod he went out and down the steps to the street.

At the office he found two reports awaiting him. One was from the men he had sent along the docks—they had found no one who could identify the photograph of Thompson. The other was from Delaney, the head of the Record's intelligence department. At 2 o'clock that morning, just before retiring, Godfrey had phoned a message to the office:

Delaney—I want all the information obtainable concerning the history of the Croydon family, to which Mrs. Richard Delroy and Grace Croydon belong.

This was the result:

Gustave Croydon, notary and money lender, 17 Rue d'Antin, Paris, removed with wife and young daughter about 1878 to Beckenham, just south of London, England. Why he removed from France not known. Rue d'Antin has been completely rebuilt within last thirty years, and only person there now who remembers Croydon is an old notary named Fabre, who has an office at the corner of Rue St. Augustin. He has vague memory that Croydon left France to avoid criminal prosecution of some sort.

Croydon bought small country place near Beckenham and lived there quietly in semi-retirement. Fortune apparently not large. In 1891 mortgaged estate for £2,000, mortgage paid in 1897. Religion, Catholic. Excellent reputation at Beckenham.

Eldest daughter, Edith, born in France Aug. 26, 1874. Educated at school there, but broke down from overstudy and returned to Beckenham, where she became interested in social settlement work. There met Richard Delroy, New York, who was making investigation of London charities. Married him June 6, 1900, and went immediately to New York.

Only other child, younger daughter, Grace, born at Beckenham May 12, 1880. Educated at home. No unusual incidents in life so far as known.

Croydon and wife died, typhoid fever, 1901. Delroys came to England and after selling property and settling estate took Grace home with them. Estate, left wholly to younger sister, paid inheritance tax on £7,500.

Godfrey read this through slowly, dwelling upon it point by point.

"The skeleton," he said to himself, "is pretty plain—it lies concealed somewhere behind Croydon's departure from France. There must have been some unusual reason for that—a reason even more serious, perhaps, than this threatened prosecution—the clippings would tell the story.

"But is it worth while trying to dig it up? It wouldn't be a difficult thing to do if the newspapers handled it at the time, but I don't know," and he stared out through the window with drawn brows. "If it's buried again, I believe I'll let it rest—for the present, anyway," and he whirled back to his desk.

He wrote the story of the day's developments and turned it in.

"We've been lucky," said the city editor, with a gleeful smile as he took the copy. "We've got photographs of all the principals."

"Have we?"

"Yes—they cost $500, but they're worth it. No other paper in town will have 'em."

"That's good," said Godfrey, but it was a half hearted commendation, and he left the office in a frame of mind not wholly amiable. The methods of a popular newspaper are not always above reproach.

"Thank heaven," he added to himself, his face clearing a little, "there's nothing in my story to implicate either Miss Croydon or Mrs. Delroy—there's no hint of the skeleton! I took care of that—which," he concluded, with a grim smile, "is mighty forbearing in a yellow journalist!"

What further tests there were to be of his forbearance not even he suspected!

CHAPTER V.

AS a matter of course, the affair at the Marathon created a great public sensation. The papers overflowed with details, theories, suggestions to the police, letters from interested readers.

It has long been a habit of mine, when any particularly abstruse criminal mystery is before the public, to pin my faith to the Record. Its other features I do not admire, but I knew that Jim Godfrey was its expert in crime, and ever since my encounter with him in the Holladay case I have entertained the liveliest admiration of his acumen and audacity. If a mystery was possible of solution, I believed that he would solve it, so it was to the Record I turned now and read carefully every word he wrote about the tragedy.

I was sitting in my room on the evening of the second day after the affair, smoking a postprandial pipe and reading the Record's stenographic report of the coroner's inquest, when there came a knock at my door and my landlady entered. She held in her hand a paper which had a formidable legal appearance.

"Have you found another apartment yet, Mr. Lester?" she asked.

"No, I haven't, Mrs. Fitch," I said. "I'm afraid I've not been as diligent in looking for one as I should have been."

"Well, I've just got another notice," and she sighed wearily. "They're going to begin tearing down the house day after tomorrow. I can't find another house, so I'm going to put my furniture in storage. I've told the men to come for it tomorrow."

"All right," I said. "If I can't find an apartment to suit, I'll put my stuff in storage, too, and stay at a hotel for awhile. I'll know by tomorrow noon, Mrs. Fitch."

I settled back in my chair and took up my paper again, when a sudden thought brought me bolt upright. Here was an apartment, two rooms and bath, just what I wanted, empty—and, moreover, so situated that I should be admirably placed for close at hand study of the tragedy. I glanced at my watch. It was only half past 7, and I hurried into my coat in a sudden fever of impatience lest some one else should get there before me.

Twenty minutes' walk brought me to the Marathon apartment house, and as I stepped into the vestibule I saw sitting by the elevator a red faced man whom I recognized instantly as Higgins, the janitor. He rose as I approached him.

"You have an apartment here to rent, haven't you?" I asked.

"Not jest now, sir," he answered. "There will be next week—if th' walkin' delegates leaves us alone. You see, th' house is being remodeled."

"Oh," I said, more disappointed than I cared to show, "I thought perhaps there was one I could move into at once. Next week won't do me any good."

He moistened his lips and scratched his head, eying me undecidedly.

"May I ask your name, sir?" he said at last.

I handed him a card which had also the address of my firm, Graham & Royce. He read it slowly.

"We've got one apartment, sir," he said, looking up when he had mastered it; "two rooms an' bath—but it needs a little cleanin' up. When do y' have t' have it?"

"I have to move in tomorrow," I answered, and I told him briefly why. "May I look at this apartment?"

He hesitated yet a moment, then straightened up with sudden resolution.

"You kin see it if you want to, sir," he said, "but first I must tell you that it's soot fourteen, where they was a—a murder two days ago."

"A murder?" I repeated. "Oh, yes; I did see something about it in the papers. Well, that doesn't make any difference; I'm not afraid of ghosts."

"Then that's all right, sir," he said, with a sigh of relief, and motioned toward the elevator.

The car stopped and he led the way down the hall.

"Here we are," he said, pausing before a door and producing a bunch of keys. "Which reminds me that I'll have t' git a key fer you—the other tenant lost his—leastways, it wasn't found on him. Or mebbe you'd rather I'd change th' lock?"

"Oh, no," I assured him. "Another key will do," and we entered together.

I examined the room with keen interest. Evidently everything had been left just as it was on the night of the crime; only the body had been removed, and it, I knew, was at the morgue waiting identification.

Higgins led the way into the bedroom and opened the door of the bathroom beyond.

"I shall bring my own furniture," I said. "But I haven't any carpets. Perhaps I can buy these. They seem pretty good."

*"It's soot fourteen, where they was a—a murder."*

"They are, sir," agreed Higgins. "They're good carpets, and as good as th' day they was put down. It'll make it lots easier for us if we don't have t' take 'em up."

"All right," I agreed. "Find out what they're worth. When can you have the rooms ready?"

He looked at me and scratched his head again. Then, remembering suddenly the nature of janitors, I took out my purse and tipped him.

"Have them ready by tomorrow afternoon," I said. "Get a man to help you, if necessary. I'll expect to be at home here tomorrow night."

"That's all right, sir," he assured me instantly, and just then the elevator bell rang. "There," he added, "it's them confounded artists, too lazy t' walk downstairs. I'll be back in a minute, sir."

I looked about the room. There was the corner where Miss Croydon had cowered, and from which she had shot at Thompson's assailant. There was the spot where Thompson himself had fallen. He had lain extended on the carpet, while the—what was that? A tiny sparkle caught my eye, a reflection of the light overhead. I sprang from my chair and stooped above the place, but could see nothing. I returned to my chair and again caught the reflection. This time I marked it exactly in the pattern of the carpet, went to it carefully, put down my hand—nothing—yes, a little hard point pressed into the carpet, so minute I could not pick it up. I moistened my finger, and an instant later under the light I saw that I had found a diamond!

"Well, have y' got it all fixed, sir?" asked a voice from the door, and I turned with a start to see Higgins standing there.

"Yes," I answered, rousing myself with an effort; and I gave him such directions as occurred to me. "Has any one else been in the rooms?" I asked.

"Say, that's funny!" he cried. "I'd purty nigh fergot it. Early this mornin' they was somebody—a woman." He came close to me and dropped his voice to a hoarse whisper. "D' y' know who I think it was? That Croydon woman!"

I stared at him in amazement.

"Weren't you sure?"

"No; she had a veil wrapped round her head an' she was dressed different. But it was her—I know it."

"And what did she want?" I asked, more and more astonished.

"She wanted t' see th' rooms, but I told her they was closed. I tell you, I was dead afeared t' come up here with her. How'd I know but she'd take a shot at me? Then she wanted t' rent 'em sight unseen, an' offered a month's rent in advance, but I told her we didn't rent soots t' single women, which was true. Mebbe I was kind o' rough, but I was a-skeered t' have her around, fer I kind o' believe she's crazy, so purty soon, after some more talkin', she give it up an' went away."

As we went down in the elevator the car stopped. A man and a woman were waiting to be taken up. At the man I did not even glance, for his companion held my eyes. Such fierce, dark, passionate beauty I had never seen before, and my nerves were still tingling with the sight of it as I left the building and turned westward toward my rooms.

CHAPTER VI.

FOR three days Thompson's body lay enthroned on its couch at the morgue, but of the thousands of people who filed past it not one could give a single clew to its identity.

Public interest waned and dwindled and passed on to other things. Even with me, living at the very scene of the crime, it faded in an astonishing way; it no longer occupied my thoughts. Over my evening pipe it was not the details of the mystery I conjured up, but a vision of a dark face.

An inquiry of the janitor developed the fact that it was my neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Tremaine, whom I had met that evening as I left the elevator. They had the apartment just across the hall from mine, and I had thought, of course, that I must meet them frequently, but three days had passed and I had caught not a glimpse of them; their hours for coming and going seemed radically different from mine.

I heard the sudden opening of a door; a scream, shrill, full of terror.

Rarely have I been so startled as I was by that voice. In an instant I was in the hall. A red light streamed through the open door of the apartment opposite, silhouetting a woman's figure, staring, with clasped hands.

I sprang past her, pulled down the burning curtains and threw them into the hall, where Higgins, who had run up the stairs, stamped out the flames. The room was full of smoke, but it was evident that the fire had spread no farther. I opened the window and the smoke was whirled away.

"Ah, bon die!" cried Mrs. Tremaine in a queerly broken but very charming mixture of French and English. "What a chance! What good fortune that you were in your room, m'sieur!"

She had closed the window with a nervous shiver at the cold and then stepped back into the full light. I fairly gasped as I looked at her. Charming she had been gowned according to the New York fashion; now she was radiant in a costume whose gorgeousness seemed just the setting her beauty needed. At the moment it completely dazzled me, but I was able afterward, in a calmer mood, to analyze it—the crimson petticoat, the embroidered chemise with its fold upon fold of lace, showing through the silken shoulder scarf; the necklace of gold beads and bracelets, studs, brooches—what not. The sight of Higgins standing staring at this vision with open mouth brought me to my senses.

"I am very happy to have been there, madame," I said, and started toward the door.

"But you will not go," she protested. "M'sieur Tremaine will be here in a moment. He will desire to thank you."

The words were accompanied by a smile there was no resisting. I faltered, stopped.

Higgins was still staring from the hall. Mrs. Tremaine stepped forward and calmly shut the door in his face.

In that instant a quick shiver ran through me, as though I had been suddenly imprisoned with a wild beast—a shiver that had in it something fearfully delightful. And let me add here that the emotion which Cecily—for so I came to know her—raised in me was not in the least admiration in the ordinary sense of the term, but rather an overpowering fascination, such as one sometimes feels in watching a magnificent tigress pacing back and forth in her cage. Such, I believe, was the feeling she inspired in most men, even in Tremaine himself.

She smiled at me again as she swept past me to a couch in one corner and sank upon it.

"Sit, m'sieur," she said, and motioned me to a chair close at hand. "I was very lonesome. I was weary of talking to my own body."

I cannot reproduce the soft dialect she spoke. Any effort to do so makes it appear grotesque, so I shall not try. At first it puzzled me occasionally, but I soon came to understand her perfectly.

"So was I," I said, smiling at the quaint expression. "I was growing very sick of my own body. Have you been in New York long?"

"Less than a month, m'sieur; and I do not like it. It is too cold, too gray."

"Ah, you have come in a bad time," I said, wondering at her almost childish expression of misery. "Wait until June. Then you will see!"

"June! Ah, we shall not remain so long—I at least! I have promised to stay one month longer, but more than that—impossible!"

She reached out and took up a cigarette from a pile which lay on a taboret beside the couch.

"It was thus the curtains caught," she laughed, and, after a whit or two, flung the still blazing taper over her shoulder. "Pouf! And they were all in flame. A moment before I was longing for excitement, any excitement whatever, but that sudden burst of fire frightened me. I rushed out, cried for help, and," she finished, with a charming little gesture, "spoiled your smoke. Try one of these."

There was no resisting her. It was like playing with fire. I took a cigarette and lighted it.

"At Fond-Corre there was much to do," she continued, with a little sigh. "Here there is nothing but to smoke, smoke!"

"Fond-Corre?" I queried.

"Just beyond St. Pierre," she explained, closing her eyes with delight at the memory. "There was our home. I can see it again in its grove of cocoa trees running down to the gray sand, with the waves lapping gently over it. Tambou! How I sigh for it!" and she stretched her arms above her head with a gesture of infinite longing.

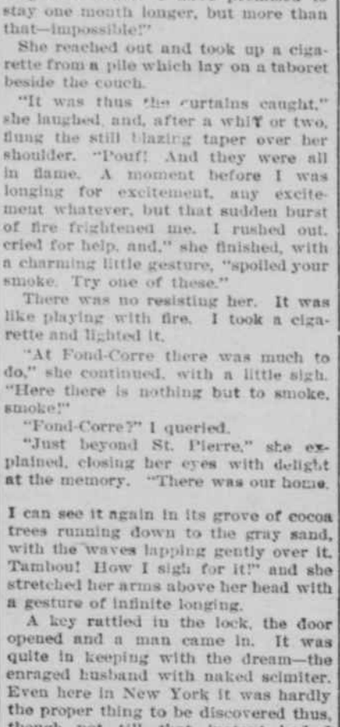
A key rattled in the lock, the door opened and a man came in. It was quite in keeping with the dream—the enraged husband with naked scimiter. Even here in New York it was hardly the proper thing to be discovered thus, though not till that instant had I thought of it.

"Ah, now," I said to myself, "stilettos and pistols! You're in a ticklish place, my friend."

But before I could rise, Cecily had sprung from the couch and thrown her arms about his neck.

"Oh, coument ou ye, doudoux?" she asked in a voice like—well, I have never heard anything to compare with it.

"Toutt douce, che—et ou?" he answered, and kissed her. Then he perceived me, seemingly for the first time, though this I somehow doubted. "Good evening, sir," he said, standing with his arm still about his wife and gazing at me with a look so sharp that I found myself for an instant unable to meet it.



*She poured the wine down its throat, drop by drop.*

His wife uttered in his ear a sentence so rapid that I was utterly unable to catch the words, but I suppose it explained the reason of my presence, for he turned to me instantly with outstretched hand.

"Cecily tells me that your presence of mind prevented a general conflagration, Mr."—

"Lester," I said. "I am your neighbor across the hall."

"My name is Tremaine, and I'm exceedingly glad to meet you," he continued, with a courtesy which charmed me from the first moment. "We must pour a libation to honor the escape."

Cecily, who had been hanging on his lips, flew to the next room and was back in a moment with decanter and glasses—three of them—and she joined us with an imperturbable matter of course air which somewhat surprised me. Only I noticed she left a little wine in her glass, and with it she approached a square cage of fine gilt mesh hanging over the radiator in the warmest corner of the room.

"She's a most extraordinary woman," Tremaine said, with a smile that seemed a little forced. "She's about to do what no other woman in the world would dare do, and she thinks nothing of it. Come and see."

Cecily had already reached the cage and was bending over it, humming a weird little refrain that rose and fell and turned upon itself, reminding me faintly of the negro spirituals I had once heard at a camp meeting in the Jersey woods. After a moment I saw a movement within the cage and a head erected itself, a broad, triangular head, deep orange barred with black, with eyes like coals of fire. It swayed to and fro, to and fro, as Cecily fitted words to the refrain—queer, chopped off creole words.

"Oh, ou jololli, oui. Oh, thou art pretty, pretty, Fe-Fel. Pa ka fai moin pe! I do not fear her, not at all! Is she not pretty?"

Gradually we had drawn nearer, Tremaine and I, and I felt myself yielding to the fascination of the song, even as the serpent did. It was not very large, nor seemingly very formidable, so I did not even think of fear when Cecily opened the little door of the cage and drew it forth. She held it between thumb and finger just behind the head and by a slight pressure she forced its jaws apart. Then she poured the wine down its throat, drop by drop. Finally she returned it to its cage and shut the door.

When it was over and she was lying again on the couch, panting with a kind of fearful exhaustion, I turned to Tremaine, who was mopping his forehead feverishly.

"I've got a kind of superstitious horror of that snake," he said apologetically as he met my eyes. "I've seen a lot of them, but none ever affected me just as this one does."

"What is it?" I asked, astonished by his pallor, by the trembling of his hand as he put away his handkerchief and reached for a cigarette. He lighted it before he answered, inviting me by a gesture to help myself.

"It's a fer-de-lance," he said at last, "one of the deadliest serpents in the world, and this particular variety is said to be especially deadly, a sort of creme de la creme, as it were. Its bite kills a man in three minutes if it happens to strike an artery. It does more than that. It turns him to a swollen, rotten piece of carrion. I've seen it." And he leaned back to blow a ring toward the ceiling.

I sat, petrified, with my cigarette halfway to my mouth.

CHAPTER VII.

MY acquaintance with the Tremaines in the weeks that followed grew by imperceptible degrees into an intimacy which was one of the most pleasant of my life. Of Cecily I have already attempted to give some idea, although I realize how cold and inadequate it is. As I began to know her better I came to wonder more and more at her complexity, her simplicity, her swift change of mood, her utter ignorance of social convention. Another thing I saw, and that was her absolute worship of Tremaine.

As for Tremaine, I hesitate to say how utterly I fell under his spell. Yet this was not in the least to be wondered at. My life had been on the whole so narrow and his had been so broad; my experience of the world had been cast in the usual grooves, while his had so evidently overleaped them, had struck out a path for itself into all sorts of unexpected places.

I have said that his life had been cast in many curious places. Martinique was only the last of these, the most recent, and I gathered that the business which brought him to New York was the forming of a syndicate to build a railroad through the island. Through is the right word, for it was evident that, owing to the island's peculiar formation, there would have to be much tunneling. But he waved all such practical difficulties aside and discoursed of the great future before such a road with an enthusiasm that was absolutely convincing.

I had just come in from dinner one evening and was settling down to a reperusal of "L'Affaire Lerouge," when there came a knock at the door and Tremaine entered. He was in evening dress and was seemingly much perturbed.

"My dear Lester," he began abruptly, in that quick, nervous way of his, "I'm in the deuce of a box, and I'm going to ask you to help me out. I promised Cecily to take her tonight to see the extravaganza at the New York, and have the seats here, but at the last moment I find I can't get away. I've a business engagement that I can't afford to break, but Cecily will never forgive me if I disappoint her. Have you anything on for tonight?"

"No," I answered, looking at him in some astonishment, for it was evident what was coming.

"Then perhaps you wouldn't mind taking Cecily? It would be a tremendous favor."

"Not at all," I assured him, "but"—

"It isn't quite convenable?" he finished as I hesitated. "Surely we don't need to stand on ceremony, and Cecily doesn't care a hang for convention. It's a great favor to both of us. She'll cry her eyes out if she has to stay at home, and I simply can't take her."

"Very well," I said, "I'll be glad to take her," and thanking me again he hurried away.

She was dressed and waiting for me when I knocked at her door, and she caught me by both hands as I entered.

"This is good of you!" she cried. "Doudoux has been so busy for many days that we have gone nowhere, but he promised me tonight. Oh, I should not have stayed at home! I should have gone alone! I care not for the eyes of the men!"

"Oh, I shan't let you go alone!" I protested, and watched her, fascinated,

*"Who is that gentleman?" demanded Cecily.*

as she put on a little bonnet and gave her hair two or three final pats before the mirror.

She was in the highest spirits, singing to herself—really, I told myself, only a child—and at last she swung around and dropped me a courtesy.

"How is that, che?" she cried, smiling up at me. "Does that please you?"

"Charming!" I cried, gasping a little, with a feeling of giddiness, as I looked down into her eyes.

Our cab swung around into Broadway, ablaze with light, and Cecily forgot me in the excitement of watching the changing crowd, the brilliant shop fronts.

"Here we are," I said as the cab drew up at the curb, and sprang out and helped her down.

We went up to the promenade after the first act and ate an ice together. The place was crowded, and Cecily soon became the center of attraction. Men strolled past merely to look at her, and from more than one woman I caught a flash of eye that said unutterable things. The advent of a new, incomparable siren could not pass unchallenged. At them all Cecily glanced from time to time with admirable nonchalance. One would have sworn she had been reared in New York. She chatted gayly, eating her ice, sipping her wine, looking at me with eyes that glowed like stars. Then suddenly as she looked up her face changed. I glanced up, too, and caught Jim Godfrey's astonished eyes fixed on mine. He bowed and passed on.

"Who is that gentleman?" demanded Cecily eagerly, leaning across the table toward me. "You know him?"

"Oh, quite well," I answered, more and more surprised. "His name is Godfrey."

"God-frey," she repeated slowly after me, as though fixing it indelibly in her memory. "And what is his business?"

"He's a reporter by trade; he gathers news for a paper," I added, seeing that she did not wholly understand.

"Oh," she said, and breathed a deep sign of relief, "I see." Then as she met my glance she added: "I fancied that I had met him somewhere; I was mistaken. In New York I have met no one except you, m'sieur."

But I scarcely heard her; my eyes had dropped to a pin at her throat. As she leaned forward I could see it very clearly—an opal surrounded by a blazing ring of diamonds. I looked at it mechanically, then with a sudden, intent interest, for one link of that brilliant ring was missing; one of the diamonds had fallen out.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

### THE BOY IN POINT.

My name is Johnny. I'm the boy
Who asks all sorts of things
So Pa can make those bright replies
With real sarcastic flings.

I've got to ask about divorce
So Pa can start his hung;
I've got to ask of politics
So Pa can loose his tongue.

They ain't the things I care about,
I've got a thankless part,
To waste my time on silly stuff
So Pa can pose as smart.

Now this is what I often think
And makes me wonder so,
Why don't they print the things I ask
That Pa don't even know?
—Puck.

**Useless Self-Immolation.**

Enoch Arden had returned and discovered that his wife had given him up for dead and married another man.

"I suppose I ought to go in and upset all that," he muttered, as he softly retreated from the window through which he had been peeping; "but it would kick up a terrible rumpus. Besides, it would knock a good poem into a cocked hat."

If he had lived a few years longer, however, his more mature judgment would have assured him that such a windup could not have spoiled the poem to any great extent.—Chicago Tribune.